

Save the Dates!

April 13-14, 2016

19th Annual Crime Victims' Rights Conference



We are pleased to announce
Dennis and Judy Shepard
as general session speakers



“Left Behind”

In October 1998, Judy and Dennis Shepard lost their 21 year-old son, Matthew, to a murder motivated by anti-gay hate. Matthew's death moved many thousands of people around the world to attend vigils and rallies in his memory. Determined to prevent others from suffering their son's fate, Judy and Dennis decided to turn their grief into action and established the Matthew Shepard Foundation to carry on Matthew's legacy. Dennis and Judy will speak to the victim's perspective on hate crimes. Judy said: "On the long road to passing this law, Dennis and I always kept in mind the true purpose, which was to not only see that justice is done for hate crime victims and their loved ones, but more importantly to educate the public about the sheer size of this problem and the community about the exact ways it can protect them. Trainings like these are vital to ensure the Act delivers its full potential." The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act enables the Justice Department to prosecute crimes motivated by race, color, religion and national origin without having to show that the victim was engaged in a federally protected activity. The Shepard-Byrd Act also empowers the department to prosecute crimes committed because of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, gender or disability as hate crimes.

Dennis has been an advocate for parents' unconditional love for their LGBT children both during Matt's life and, very publicly, since the hate-motivated murder in Laramie, Wyoming. Dennis earned a degree in education and a professional engineer's license in safety, and is currently the chairman of the State of Wyoming OSHA Commission. He has served on the Matthew Shepard Foundation board of directors since the organization's inception. Judy is the founding president of the Matthew Shepard Foundation Board of Directors, and served as its first executive director as well, from 1999 to 2009. Speaking from a mother's perspective, Judy also authored a 2009 memoir, "The Meaning of Matthew," exploring the family's journey through the prosecution of Matthew's assailants, the ensuing media coverage, and their continuing work to advance civil rights. Originally trained as a teacher, Mrs. Shepard holds a Bachelor of the Arts degree in Secondary Education. Dennis and Judy speak to audiences around the country, particularly to victims' advocacy organizations and law enforcement audiences about their experiences and the importance of equal treatment of LGBT crime victims and their loved ones. Dennis and Judy continue to make their home in Casper, Wyoming.



Capitol Plaza Hotel and Convention Center
Topeka, Kansas

More Conference Announcements Coming Soon!